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## A PLEA FOR FREE SILVER.

BY THE HON. D. W. VOORHEES, UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM  
INDIANA.

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THE precious metals of the world now in use as money may be estimated as follows :

|             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| Gold.....   | \$3,727,018,869 |
| Silver..... | \$3,320,371,346 |

The movement, therefore, in this and other countries for the demonetization of silver, and for its degradation to a commodity such as corn, iron, wheat, and pork, has for its plain and specific purpose the destruction of something more than one-half the specie currency of the world. The human mind can hardly conceive a more tremendous financial revolution or one fraught with graver consequences. If it is claimed, however, that the continued and persistent assaults on silver do not mean its complete extermination as a financial factor, but only its curtailment and limitation, the facts of history arise at once to refute such a claim. The position now assumed by the leading opponents of silver money, to the effect that they simply wish to limit its coinage to the American product and to equalize its circulating value with that of gold, is not a position of choice or free will, but is the result of the coercive power of public opinion. It is the position to which in the last fourteen years they have been driven, step by step, by an awakened and aroused resistance on the part of the people to their actual and original scheme for the total overthrow and extinction of silver money.

The fatal scope of the legislation of 1873, by which silver was demonetized, and the sinister and secret methods then adopted, will be remembered as long as the financial history of this country endures ; and the real purpose of the enemies of silver will be understood and interpreted by that legislation, rather than by their present enforced attitude.

The silent and surreptitious elimination of the silver dollar from coinage in 1873, and from circulation as legal-tender except for the sum of five dollars and under, was intended as the death-blow to silver money in this country, and would have remained and operated as such but for the sweeping popular protest which a few years later followed the discovery of the wrong and fraud. The authors of the design against silver at that time played with hidden hands; so much so that the most vigilant representatives in both branches of Congress were deceived, and even the President of the United States, when he signed the bill, was not aware, as his public utterances afterwards disclosed, of the stealthy and destructive step which had been taken.

Now, however, those who eighteen years ago wrought under cover for the destruction of one-half the honest, debt-paying money of the American people, are as well known as if a calcium light had been turned on them, and are as universally distrusted by the plain, laboring, and productive masses as if they had been caught in the commission of crime. This feeling of distrust is confined to no one party. The ablest and most distinguished opponent of silver money in the United States, and, more than any other one man, the author of the legislation of 1873 on that subject, has been before three national conventions of the Republican party seeking a nomination for the Presidency, and seeking it in vain. Mr. Sherman, of Ohio, is always to be spoken of with respect as a man of ability and large experience, and more especially so in connection with the finances of the country. It is true he has been on both sides of every financial issue for more than a quarter of a century past, but it is also true that he has always veered from one point of the compass to the other at the exact time when his services were most valuable to the money power, and most oppressive to the laboring, over-taxed, debt-paying farmers and wage-workers of the country. And yet, with all his eminent services in behalf of the financial centres, as they are called, banking corporations, usurers, interest-eaters, and parasites on human labor generally, the leaders of the Republican party in New York have never dared in national convention to cast the vote of that State for him. The opportunity was presented in 1880, 1884, and 1888, and the weight of obligation which the moneyed interests were under to Mr. Sherman was not denied; but a wholesome fear that the plain people would resent

at the polls his hostility to their interests restrained the impulse of gratitude, if, indeed, such a sensation as gratitude is ever known to organized wealth.

In reaching a conclusion adverse to the sincerity, patriotism, and public virtue of the leaders of the crusade against silver money, the American people have been actively and earnestly engaged, especially since 1878, in educating themselves on the subject from every legitimate source of information. They have examined the history of silver from the days of the patriarchs to the present time, in order to ascertain wherein it has been at fault in the world's commerce, trade, and traffic, and why now, near the close of the nineteenth century, it deserves extermination. They have scanned its career as it has come down through all the ages alongside of gold, in order to see where and when it has proved a less honorable money metal, or a less reliable measure of value, than the yellow coin which has borne it company. When some startling crime takes place, when a homicide is committed, the real motive of the perpetrator becomes the subject of anxious and vigilant scrutiny; and so when the assassination of silver money occurred in 1873, it put the American people on notice to discover, if possible, the true meaning of such an unexpected and revolutionary act. They have found nothing in the origin, history, career, or services of silver during the past four thousand years to inspire an honest or patriotic motive for its death. Its origin as money under divine law is the same as that accorded to gold.

In American history the silver dollar has a peculiarly glorious origin, exalted sanction, and useful career.

The paternity of the silver dollar of the United States is due to Thomas Jefferson. In June, 1783, that great leader of political and economic thought in his own country and throughout the world, was appointed by the Legislature of Virginia a delegate to the Continental Congress, and took his seat as such at Trenton on the 4th day of November following. With the achievement of our independence it became necessary to depart from the English system of pounds, shillings, and pence, and to devise a system of currency for ourselves—an American system. In his autobiography, written in 1821, Jefferson, in referring to the proceedings of the Congress whereof he became a member, says:

“They, as early as January 7, 1782, had turned their attention to the

moneys current in the several States, and had directed the Financier, Robert Morris, to report to them a table of rates at which the foreign coins should be received at the Treasury. That officer, or rather his assistant, Gouverneur Morris, answered them on the 15th in an able and elaborate statement of the denominations of money current in the several States, and of the comparative value of the foreign coins chiefly in circulation with us. He went into the consideration of the necessity of establishing a standard of value with us, and of the adoption of a money unit."

Jefferson then describes the standard of value and the money unit reported by the Financier to whom the subject had been intrusted; and proceeds to point out his objections to the same. Having given his views against the report, he says on page 53 of his autobiography, Vol. I. of his complete works :

"Such a system of money-arithmetic would be entirely unmanageable for the common purposes of society. I proposed, therefore, instead of this, to adopt the Dollar as our unit of account and payment, and that its divisions and sub-divisions should be in the decimal ratio. I wrote some notes on the subject which I submitted to the consideration of the Financier. I received his answer and adherence to his general system, only agreeing to take for his unit one hundred of those he first proposed, so that a Dollar should be  $14\frac{2}{3}\%$  and a crown 16 units. I replied to this, and printed my notes and reply on a flying sheet, which I put into the hands of the members of Congress for consideration, and the committee agreed to report on my principle. This was adopted the ensuing year, and is the system which now prevails."

In the appendix to his autobiography Jefferson still further explains the silver dollar as our standard of value and unit of account and payment, discusses the amount of pure silver and of alloy it should contain, and points out the proportion which gold should bear to silver,—silver being the standard by which to measure the value of gold, as well as the value of everything else.

The action of the Continental Congress, thus secured by Jefferson, was immediately indorsed under the federal constitution of 1789, and received the full sanction of that instrument. Alexander Hamilton, Washington's first Secretary of the Treasury, universally regarded as one of the greatest financiers in the world's history, fully concurred with Jefferson in regard to the coinage and use of silver money. In a report made to Congress in 1791 Hamilton said:

"To annul the use of either of the metals as money is to abridge the quantity of the circulating medium, and is liable to all the objections which arise from a comparison of the benefits of a full with the evils of a scanty circulation."

Washington, in the abundance of his wisdom, gave his strong approval to the free and unlimited coinage of silver, and the giant

intellects of such men as Madison and John Marshall failed to discover that such legislation was either dangerous or reckless. And then from the beginning of the republic, onward in its marvellous career of development and glory, the dollar of the fathers and of the constitution for eighty-four years rendered its constant and indispensable aid to the trade, commerce, and prosperity of the American people. In peace and in war it was honorable par-money, and often higher than par with gold, in all the gigantic and widespread transactions of American progress and expansion. For more than three-quarters of the most enlightened and progressive century in human history the silver dollar was the honored and unquestioned currency of the United States Government. At the most critical and crucial periods of that government's existence it was far more relied upon than gold. The war of 1812, the war with Mexico, and the war for the Union were more indebted for their success to silver money, both as a circulating medium and as a metallic basis for the support of a paper currency, than to gold. The gold of the country in times of peril lies hidden away for speculative purposes, while silver remains with the masses and bears the brunt of active use. It is especially endeared to the pioneers and settlers of the new States, admitted into the Union after the adoption of the constitution, and to their descendants who have witnessed its blessings.

With silver money the vast farming regions of the United States have been bought and paid for, and the homes of millions, and of hundreds of millions yet to come, secured and improved wholly by its use. In all those mighty agricultural belts lying in the embrace of the Mississippi and its tremendous tributaries, it has been known and proudly designated as "land-office money." Up the gradual and fertile slopes of the Rocky Mountains, onward through their deep-cleft cañons, over their ranges of perpetual snow, and down on the other side through lands of fabulous wealth and tropical beauty, to the peaceful waters of the Pacific Ocean, the silver dollar has been the active, ever-present money of advancing civilization, the foremost financial missionary in the conversion of the wilderness and waste places into smiling abodes of human happiness. Silver money is the busy, efficient agent of the laboring millions of the world in their daily and hourly transactions involving small sums, while the functions of gold are

mainly adapted to the use of great operators, the wealthy but powerful few. Hence at every stage of American industrial development, the farmer, the mechanic, the wage-worker, and all the sons and daughters of toil, working their way across the continent, conquering its plains for the husbandman, building cities of commerce by its lakes and rivers, and interlacing it from ocean to ocean with vast thoroughfares of iron, steel, and steam, have never doubted the dollar of their fathers, and have only wished it more plentiful in exchange for their daily labor.

By whom, then, and for what reason, has silver money, with such a record for usefulness and integrity, been assailed for destruction? The charge that it is, or ever has been, dishonest money can come only from dishonest sources. The statement that the legal-tender silver dollar ever cheated the laborer is simply a self-evident falsehood. Those who speak of it as a debased currency only debase themselves by first slandering what their selfish interests and knavish avarice impel them to destroy. Even now, after eighteen years of assault and defamation, crippled and discredited as silver money has been by the legislation of 1873, the world bears witness every day that its purchasing power is as great as that of gold, and that it will purchase the gold itself, dollar for dollar, whenever such a transaction is desirable.

It may be stated, therefore, without the slightest fear of contradiction that the attack upon silver money in this and other countries is based upon no demerit or unsoundness on its part, but is simply a movement for the contraction of the currency to the extent of more than one-half the precious metals now in existence. This movement is made by the moneyed classes who wish to increase the purchasing and interest-gathering power of money in their own hands by making it scarce in the hands of others; by people with large incomes growing out of monopolies protected by unjust legislation; by those who enjoy annuities, interest on public securities, fixed salaries under great corporations, and by the creditor classes in general, including all the enormous loan associations, who join in the movement of silver destruction and financial contraction in order to enhance two-fold, and more, the value and power of the money they wring from the hands of the laboring people. There is a power in this movement of financial contraction, if successful, which will result in the practical enslavement of those who

are in debt and who toil for a living. The power of money to govern countries and to enslave people is always to be found where money is concentrated in the hands of the privileged few, while to the great body of the people, the laboring multitudes, is left but a meagre, scant, and stinted circulation with which to supply their wants and meet the exactions laid upon them. The policy of contraction is the policy of organized, unsparing, pitiless avarice, and in its rage to diminish the amount of money in the hands of the people, one branch of the currency is no more secure from assault than another. The establishment of a plutocracy, which is defined as the "paramount influence of wealth, the rule or supremacy of the rich," is the sole aim and end in view, and neither is the best-secured, best debt-paying, legal-tender, par-circulating paper money in the world, nor gold itself, if found to stand in the way of contraction, any safer than silver from attack by the enemies of a full circulation and good prices for labor and property.

Gladstone, in pointing out the dangers which beset England, says: "We are in danger of engendering both a gerontocracy and a plutocracy." A gerontocracy signifies the rule of old families—a danger not yet imminent in this country; but a far greater evil is at our doors. The power of money, pure and simple, in the hands of a very small percentage of our population, who are without ability except in money-getting, and without honorable service to their country in war or in peace, now rules the councils of this government, and casts its threatening and baleful shadow over the present and the future of the American people.

In arriving at a conclusion as to the true motives which inspire the movement for the demonetization of silver, the history of the production of the precious metals and the effect of new mines and increased supplies become of great interest and importance. When gold was found in large quantities in California and Australia, a panic ensued among the creditor and fixed-income classes throughout the world, for fear the amount of gold then in use would be so increased as to weaken its purchasing power, and make it too easily attainable by the producing classes in exchange for their commodities.

He who examines the current history of the times forty years ago will find that upon the discovery of the new gold-fields of that period an excited and alarmed discussion sprang up in regard to

the threatened evils of a gold-inflation produced by an over-abundant supply of that particular metal. Many writers throughout Europe and in this country engaged their talents on the subject. They regarded the expansion of the currency by the new streams of gold pouring into it as a frightful calamity, and raised their vehement and doleful protests against it.

Many authors might be cited, and numerous extracts given, all evincing the same hostility to gold because of the quantity, not the quality, of the money it was likely to afford. So great, in fact, was the alarm created that gold was actually demonetized in Austria and in most of the German states within a period of seven or eight years after California and Australia commenced pouring their treasures into the channels of trade and commerce. This action was reversed, and silver was selected as the victim for demonetization, only when the discovery of silver in such mighty deposits as the Comstock Lode and in other great mines seemed to threaten a greater increase in silver than in gold.

In a speech of very great ability and research delivered in the Senate on the 12th and 13th days of May, 1890, Senator Jones, of Nevada, made the following statement :

"But as soon as the discoveries of gold were made in the alluvial deposits of California and Australia, or, rather, as soon as it was suspected that money would thereby become considerably increased in volume, the annuitants and income classes, the creditors everywhere, took steps to avert what they characterized as a great calamity. They openly declared their purpose, by every means in their power, to prevent a decline in the value of money, so that the purchasing power of their incomes might not be reduced. They determined to go to any length in order to prevent the rise of prices which their aggressive instincts led them to fear would follow the addition to the money volume of the world by the natural and much-needed yield of the mines. The fiat therefore went forth that one of the metals must be discarded. If anything were needed to demonstrate that the reason for the demonetization of silver was the cupidity of the creditor classes, the money-lenders, annuitants, and those in receipt of fixed incomes, and that it was not any defect inhering in the metal silver, nor any change in its adaptability to subserve the purposes of money, it is found in the significant fact that the metal first selected for demonetization was not silver, but gold—that metal which has since become the idol of the money-changers, and which is now declared to be the only natural money. The openly-avowed determination was to increase the power of money, and in order to accomplish that purpose the metal which promised the largest yield was to be condemned and stripped of its ancient monetary function. So strongly was this determination set forth, so earnestly was it presented, and so urgently pressed on the ground of duty, that its achievement came to be regarded as the fulfillment of a high moral purpose."

It is constantly insisted, however, that the coinage and use of silver money will drive gold out of the country which adopts both metals. The facts of history not only refute such a statement, but place it beyond discussion and reduce it to contempt. The dismal prediction of gold-exportation from our shores was repeated a thousand times on the floors of both branches of Congress when silver was restored to coinage in 1878, and the raven-croak of coming disaster was taken up and echoed all over the land by the subsidized agencies of the monometallists, the money power, the plutocracy. It is enough to say on this point that, while there were \$230,000,000 of gold in this country in 1878, there are about \$700,000,000 now. Instead of being forced abroad by the exigencies of trade, gold has remained at home and multiplied itself more than three-fold. This stupendous fact would of itself crush the movement for the destruction of silver were it not that insatiate avarice is deaf to reason and blind to truth. The spirit of Mammon, the lowest of the fallen angels, can never die, but lives on forever, spanning the eternities with falsehood, fraud, and false pretence, for the oppression of the toiling multitudes of the human race.

Let France be cited in proof of the fraternal relations with which gold and silver, when equally honored, move along *pari passu* in the affairs of a government, whether in prosperity or adversity, in sunshine or in storm. The government of France since 1803, whether under the Napoleons or the Bourbons, or emerging from the rags and shackles of monarchy into the glorious garb of a republic, has never discriminated between the free and unlimited coinage of the two metals, and her financial record, tried by the hardest tests, is without a parallel amongst the nations of the earth. No other people on the globe could have furnished forth without panic, bank failures, and widespread financial disaster, one thousand millions of dollars (\$1,000,000,000) in gold on the sudden demand of their conquerors, to be drawn at once in bulk by loaded trains and army wagons from their country. Through this terrible ordeal the government of France, without sigh or groan of financial distress, passed at the close of the Franco-Prussian War. Her people, full of employment at fair prices, with a circulating medium three times as large per capita as their European neighbors, or as our own, have remained contentedly at home. Emigration from France is unknown,

while every port on our shores is crowded from day to day and from year to year by German laborers, the very bone and sinew of their fatherland, fleeing from the oppression and impoverishment inflicted upon Germany by the demonetization of silver and the meagre amount of money left in circulation. In a recent speech made by Joseph F. Johnston, president of the Alabama National Bank at Birmingham, the following very striking and instructive passage occurs :

“Can we not follow in the steps of the great republic of Europe? No country on the face of the earth has such a financial record as France; in an incredibly short period of time she not only recovered from the enormous losses of war, and the heavy exactions of a victorious enemy, but was able to come to the relief of imperial England and save her from destruction, when her financial system was tottering, and the monetary repose of the world threatened by the fall of the Barings.

“If, at that time, she had had only one hundred millions of silver, instead of seven hundred millions, what destruction would have followed that financial earthquake! The broken wrecks would have been found on every beach, and desolation and distress would have swept over the civilized world. . . .

“If all the silver produced in the world, less that used in the arts, was coined into dollars by the government of the United States, it would require the world's product for nearly ten years to give us the per-capita circulation of silver that France now has.”

But the opponents of silver in the United States point to Great Britain as an example for the American people to follow. A more unfortunate reference could not be made in support of the demonetization of silver. The British Government is based upon an aristocracy of wealth and pauperized labor to an extent hitherto unknown since the downfall of corrupt, imperial Rome. Her policy has not only placed her as the leading creditor nation of the earth, but in the midst of her own people she has made distinctions so deep and broad that the very few own everything, and their established incomes swallow up the proceeds of every toiling hand in the United Kingdom. The oppression of the British laborer arises not from free trade, which is, in fact, the chief wisdom of that government, and of all other governments in a condition to adopt it, but from a stringent contraction of the amount of money in circulation, and the consequent increase of the purchasing power of money in exchange for labor and for what labor produces.

A glance at the creditor and income classes, on the one hand, and the toiling multitudes, on the other, throughout Great Britain,

is appalling. According to reliable official statements, the population of the United Kingdom, embracing England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, may be put down at 28,000,000, and her lands at 72,119,962 acres. Of these lands 51,885,148 acres, more than two-thirds of the whole landed property of the kingdom, are owned by less than 11,000 persons. These vast land-owners draw a rental from an oppressed tenantry of over \$562,000,000 per annum, and as the amount of money circulating in the kingdom is contracted, and its volume diminished, so is the purchasing and governing power of these enormous millions increased, and the privileged few aggrandized by grinding the faces of the poor. The foreign policy of England is often denounced for its brutal rapacity, but her home policy, whereby an idle, sensual, income-devouring aristocracy enjoys full and free license to prey upon her toiling masses, wears a darker hue than even the perfidious and crimson stains she has left on distant shores, and with which she has incarnadined the seas. The demonetization of silver is simply in accord with her general system of wealth-aggrandizement and labor-oppression, and is driving her laboring subjects from her shores in numbers equal to great armies every year.

Let those who ape the British system of finances look steadfastly at the horrible results which have followed its adoption and enforcement at home. It is there, as it is here, a concoction of educated, sleepless, ruthless avarice for the purpose of making a shrinkage in all values except the value of money due to the monopolists of wealth; for the purpose of cheapening the wages of every day-laborer and the price of everything which labor has to sell. Such a system of government is fraught with far greater calamities to the great body of the people than the visitations of war or the scourge of pestilence. Falling prices, low rates for labor, and business stagnation, consequent upon scarcity of money among the people, constitute the sources of all the evils which ever afflicted civilized man.

Political organizations may be disturbed by differences of opinion in their ranks, and may sometimes dodge and evade this great question as far as possible; but the American people are growing more enlightened every day, and in the very near future they will reestablish the policy of Jefferson and the fathers, and restore to themselves the natural and unrestricted use of silver money. The free and unlimited coinage of silver will stand as

an issue in the elections of this and approaching years until its complete triumph. No one, at least in the Democratic party, will seek to obscure or subordinate other great issues, such as Tariff Reform, the Force Bill, and the prevailing profligacy in the expenditure of public moneys, but, at the same time, no one need expect the silver issue itself to be ignored, or to lose its vital importance in the consideration of the people or in the councils of the government.

D. W. VOORHEES.